

The Effect of Task-Based Learning Technique and Learning Styles on the Speaking Achievement of Semester II English DIII Students of Ganesha University of Education

By

Ni Putu Era Marsakawati

ABSTRACT

This article is intended to describe the result of a study aimed at investigating the effect of task-based learning technique and learning styles on the speaking achievement of semester II English DIII students of Ganesha University of Education. This experimental research applied the *posttest only control group design* by using 2 x 2 factorial design. Instruments which were used in this study were speaking test, analytical scoring rubric, learning style instrument, field note, and interview guide. Speaking test, analytical scoring rubric, and learning style instrument were used to gain quantitative data, while field note and interview guide were used to obtain qualitative data. The obtained data were analyzed by administering quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The result of the study showed that task-based learning technique and learning styles did affect the speaking achievement of semester II English DIII students of Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha. Task-based learning technique could affect students' speaking achievement because it provided sufficient opportunities for students to use the language. It provided more exposure on the target language and increased students' interest, motivation, and self confidence. Meanwhile, learning styles could affect students' speaking achievement due to the technique implemented by the teacher, the skill focused in the study, and students' culture.

Key words: learning technique, learning style, and speaking achievement

Pengaruh Teknik Pembelajaran Berbasis Tugas dan Gaya Belajar terhadap Kemampuan Berbicara Mahasiswa Semester II Jurusan Bahasa Inggris DIII, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk memaparkan hasil penelitian yang bertujuan untuk mengetahui pengaruh teknik pembelajaran berbasis tugas dan gaya belajar terhadap kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa semester II Jurusan Bahasa Inggris DIII, Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha. Rancangan penelitian yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah *posttest only control group design* dengan rancangan *factorial 2 x 2*. Instrumen yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah tes kemampuan berbicara, rubrik penskoran analitik, instrumen gaya belajar, catatan lapangan (*field note*), dan pedoman wawancara (*interview guide*). Tes kemampuan berbicara, rubrik penskoran analitik, dan instrumen gaya belajar digunakan untuk memperoleh data kuantitatif, sementara catatan lapangan (*field note*) dan pedoman wawancara (*interview guide*) digunakan untuk memperoleh data kualitatif. Data-data yang telah diperoleh dianalisis secara kuantitatif dan kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa teknik pembelajaran berbasis tugas dan gaya belajar berpengaruh terhadap kemampuan berbahasa Inggris mahasiswa semester II Jurusan Bahasa Inggris DIII. Teknik pembelajaran berbasis tugas dapat mempengaruhi kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa karena teknik ini menyediakan kesempatan yang banyak bagi mahasiswa untuk menggunakan bahasa Inggris mereka. Teknik pembelajaran berbasis kelas mampu mempengaruhi kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa karena teknik ini menyediakan kesempatan yang banyak bagi mahasiswa untuk menggunakan bahasa Inggris mereka, teknik ini banyak menyediakan *exposure* terhadap bahasa target, dan teknik ini mampu meningkatkan minat, motivasi dan rasa percaya diri mahasiswa, sementara gaya belajar mampu mempengaruhi kemampuan berbicara mahasiswa yang dikarenakan oleh teknik pembelajaran berbasis tugas yang diimplementasi oleh peneliti, jenis keterampilan berbahasa yang diteliti, dan budaya mahasiswa.

Kata kunci: teknik pembelajaran, gaya belajar, dan kemampuan berbicara.

1. Introduction

The aim of language teaching is to enable learners to use the language they have learned in school or college to communicate confidently and effectively with other users of English in the world outside. However, the fact showed that many learners are failed to achieve the desired goal of learning. They are still unable to use the language in real life. It is true that they know the correct grammar, but cannot confidently able to take part in a conversation on everyday topics.

The problem above was caused by some factors, either from teachers' side or students' side. From the teachers' side, the problem was caused by the technique applied in teaching speaking. They gave more emphasis on form than on meaning. They taught speaking but the techniques implemented to teach speaking did not provide the students sufficient opportunity to practice speaking. The activities were more about some exercises on language structure. Eventhough there was a practice, that was not a real practice. The practice was still controlled by the teachers and did not resemble a real life communication. It was so unnatural. Meanwhile, from the students' side, the problem was caused by the intrinsic factors, such as their

motivation and interest. They were not motivated to learn since they were strictly thought about the accuracy than the fluency. They were afraid of producing sentences to avoid being humiliated by the teacher and the students if they produced incorrect grammar, pronunciation or choice of words. They preferred to keep silent to practicing the target language.

The problem above needs to be solved. In order to help students accomplish their learning objective, the teachers need to equip themselves with an effective teaching technique applied to teach speaking. The techniques should help the students to practice their English and to employ it in a real situation. One technique which can be implemented by the teachers is task-based learning technique. It offers an alternative technique for language teachers in language teaching and learning to teach speaking (Willis, 2007). In a task-based lesson the teacher does not pre-determine what language will be studied, the lesson is based around the completion of a central task and the language studied is determined by what happens as the students complete it.

Task-based learning technique is beneficial to promote student's speaking achievement (Sinatra, 2009). In task-based learning technique, teachers have a lot of opportunities to develop various activities. Teacher can use fun activities with familiar topics to students. The familiarity of topic and the enjoyment in conducting the task is the solution of students' low participation in speaking class. Task-based learning technique gives a greater chance to speak and communicate in the target language.

Task-based learning technique consists of some elements. One of those elements is setting. Setting refers to the classroom arrangement affecting interaction entailed in the task, such as pair work or group (Oura, 2001). Therefore, in implementing task-based learning technique, teacher often asks the students to interact with others to practice English. In this case, teacher mostly assigns students to work either in pairs or in groups. However, in implementing group work, teachers cannot just merely put the students into certain group randomly without any consideration. Instead, they should consider some factors; one of them is students' diversity in their preference in learning.

Lightbown & Spada (1999) state that learners have clear preferences for how they go about learning new material. The term learning style was introduced to describe students' preferences in learning and studying. This is actually an aspect of personality that influences the students' achievement. Among many types of learning styles, the study was focused on examining two types of learning styles in English, they were: field dependent and field independent learning style. These two styles of learning were selected because the characteristics of field dependent and field independent learners are closely related with the characteristics of task-based learning technique.

Understanding the way students learn is of crucial importance and is the key to educational improvement. It is true that students take in and understand the materials in different ways. Some enjoys learning individually and feel reluctant to collaborate with others. Conversely, others prefer learning together with their peers or groups. Meehan (2005) says that field dependent learners are more socially oriented than independent learners. They pay more attention to social cues, they like to be with others and they seek learning and experiences that put them in contact with people.

This intrinsic factor should be taken into consideration in order to help students to accomplish their learning objective. Matching or mismatching students' learning styles with teaching techniques affects learning significantly. A better understanding of students' learning styles preferences can help students to increase their motivation and interest in learning. They feel

comfortable to learn. As a result, their achievement is also increased.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher then would like to investigate the effect of teaching technique that is task-based learning technique implemented by the teacher, and students' learning styles on the speaking achievement of semester II English DIII students of Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha.

2. Research Methods

In order to achieve the research objectives, there were 40 out of 68 students were taken to be the sample of the study. The sample was selected through simple random sampling technique. The experimental research of *posttest only control group design* with 2x2 factorial was applied in this study. In order to obtain data, two kinds of instruments were administered, namely data collector instruments and treatment instruments. Data collector instruments covered speaking test, analytical scoring

rubric, learning style instrument, field note, and interview guide. Speaking test, analytical scoring rubric, and learning style instrument were used to collect quantitative data, meanwhile field note and interview guide were used to collect qualitative data. Treatment instruments covered teaching scenario and teaching handout. The obtained data then were analyzed using two forms of data analysis; they were quantitative data analysis and qualitative data analysis.

3. Findings and Discussion

The obtained data were firstly analyzed quantitatively using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The Two way - ANOVA at the significance

level of 5 % was used in this study. The analysis result showed that task-based learning technique and learning styles did affect students' speaking achievement.

The speaking achievement of students who were taught by task-based learning technique was higher than the speaking achievement of those who were taught by conventional technique. This can be proven by the gained mean score, in which the mean score of the speaking achievement of students who were taught by task-based learning technique was 79.18, meanwhile the mean score of the speaking achievement of students who were taught by conventional technique was 74.22. The speaking achievement of field dependent students who were taught by task-based learning technique was higher than the speaking achievement of field independent students. This can be proven by comparing the mean score of both groups. The mean score of speaking achievement of field dependent learners was 78.33, and the mean score of speaking achievement of field independent learners was 75.07. The finding also indicated the implementation of task-based learning technique and learning styles interacted positively. Meaning that there was an interaction between the teaching technique (task-based learning technique and students' learning styles on the students' speaking achievement. The result of tukey analysis showed that task-

based learning helped could help both field dependent and independent learners but gave a stronger impact on field dependent learners.

The result of qualitative analysis then showed that task-based learning technique could influence students' speaking achievement because *first*, task-based learning technique could provide sufficient opportunity for students to use the language. Task-based learning technique offered the student an opportunity to use the language (Skehan, 2003). The primary focus of classroom activity was the task and language was the instrument which the students used to complete it. The task was an activity in which students used language to achieve a specific outcome (Ellis, 2003). The activity reflected real life and learners focused on meaning, they were free to use any language they want. The students talk time was more than the teacher talk time in which students talked a lot in all stages of task-based learning implementation. It was clearly seen at every stage of the implementation of task-based learning technique, starting from pre-task, task-cycle, and language focus. At pre-stage, the teacher introduced and created interest in doing a task on the chosen topic. In addition, she

also activated topic-related words, phrases, and target sentences that would be useful in carrying out the task. However, teacher did not present it, she just did brainstorming. At this stage, speaking activity was begun. Teacher posed some questions which were answered by students. Students also raised some questions related to the task that they had to accomplish. Task-cycle consists of the task plus planning and report phase in which students present spoken or written reports of the work done in the task. At this stage, teacher applied jigsaw technique. Students were asked to work in groups (one group consists of four students). Each group was given part of today's subtopic in which each group had different part of today's subtopic. They had to learn and discuss that part of subtopic in their group. After discussing the material in groups, they were assigned to form expert group. Expert groups discuss the material and brainstorm ways in which to present their understandings to the other members of their "home" group; the experts return to their "home" groups to teach their portion of the materials and to learn from the other members of their "home" group. In learning and discussing the materials, they used the target

language to communicate. They might use whatever linguistic resources they possess to achieve the goals of the task, however they were strongly not allowed to use their mother tongue. Here, the teacher monitored the students, she came to each group to ensure that they communicated in the target language and they performed the expected task. In addition, monitoring was also done to avoid the risk of developing fluency at the expense of accuracy. The implementation of jigsaw would allow the learners to practice the target language and each student had the same opportunity to speak.

Having performed jigsaw activity, the teacher assigned the students to perform a role play in groups/pairs based on the topic. They had to write the script and they had to videotape the performance. The writing script was done in the classroom, in which they might consult with the teacher; meanwhile the process of videotape was done at home.

At language focus stage, some of specific features of the language, which occurred naturally during the task, were identified and analyzed. At the analysis stage, the teacher asked the students to submit their work. She then had the students work in group of four. Each

group had two video of their friends' performance. They had to analyze their friends' performance in which the result of their discussion had to be presented in front of the class. This activity again provided opportunity for students to practice the language. Having all groups presented the result of analysis, the teacher then discussed the topic with all students. This included language forms/structures used by students, problems they encountered, and mispronunciation. This was at practice stage.

The second reason why task-based learning technique could influence students' speaking technique because it provided more exposure on the target language. Most methodologist and researchers in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) admit that foreign language learning is favored when it meets with the following conditions: a) learners should be exposed to the language. There is a direct relationship between exposure to the language and linguistic acquisition. Exposure counts as a necessary input phase before the learners are able to generate any output and refer both to the oral and written language, and b) Learners use the language and practice with it especially

in a communicative context. Learners can use the language in real life situation.

Those conditions have been intensively recidivated by the communicative method and task-based learning is consistent with its communicative roots in assuming a similar claim. Task-based learning does not seem to be based on new learning principles. Rather, it offers a novel way of being exposed to and practicing the language, and at the same time involving and motivating the students. This novel way is the task. Practicing and using the language by means of a task is supposed to produce more effective teaching. It means that task in task-based learning provides full opportunities for both input and output requirements which are believed to be the key concept in language teaching.

The third reason was because task-based learning could increase students' interest, motivation, and self confidence. Task-based learning technique could increase students' interest, motivation and self confidence in learning. During the task, the learners were allowed to use whatever language they want, freeing them to focus entirely on the meaning of their message. They were not afraid of making mistakes on producing incorrect

grammar, pronunciation or choice of words. Their interest and motivation were increased because students felt relaxed while learning. They did not get tense to produce a correct sentence. The learning situation was also fun and enjoyable. They could interact not only with their teacher but also with their friends in pair or group work. In addition, the authentic materials used by the teacher in implementing task-based learning technique also increased students' motivation in learning. The materials helped the learners involved in the real language. They felt that they gained a significant benefit on the materials in which they could use them in real settings. The students' self confidence especially poor students was also increased because they could get involved in teaching and learning process. They had the same portion to speak in the classroom as the good students.

Learning style as another variable which was experimented in the current study also gave a positive effect on students speaking achievement. There are three reasons why learning styles could influence students' speaking achievement. Their influence was due to *first*, the teaching technique implemented by the teacher. From the observation and

interview, it was proven that the implementation task-based learning technique could accommodate both field dependent and field independent students, but helped field dependent more. The result of interview also revealed that field dependent and field independent learning style influenced students' speaking achievement. Based on the interview, it was found that students felt so motivated to learn. Field dependent learners said that they liked learning through group work. They could share their knowledge with their friends. They could consult with their peers, and the most important thing was they could practice their English within their groups. They were so happy and enjoyed the grouping work. They really spoke naturally. Some students said that through group work, they could assess their ability by comparing to their friends. They did such kind of self reflection on their speaking ability. When they found that their friends' speaking ability were better than their speaking ability, they were challenged to learn a lot to increase their ability. They said that grouping the students in fulfilling the task were really meant for them. They said that it was easier for them to catch and understand the material when they

worked in group. They could discuss and share the problems, take and give, practice their English, and increase their motivation. Through group work, they could interact each other, find his strengths and weaknesses, and build interpersonal skills.

Field dependent learners liked learning materials which were closely related to real life. They said so because they could have benefit from the materials. They could use or apply the materials to real life. It was so meaningful for them. The six selected topics (*greeting friends and strangers, asking and giving information,, asking and giving opinion, agreeing and disagreeing, asking and giving suggestion, and describing someone*) were considered as authentic materials for students. Eventhough, each student had a different preference on those topics.

Field dependent learners like visual aids so much. It means that their learning could be accelerated very well when the teacher provided some visual aids, like video. They said that besides making the learning became interesting, exciting, and joyful, the use of video also helped them in understanding the materials. They loved to see what they

were learning. They could remember the materials with ease.

However, field independent learners are referred to analytical learners. They liked analyzing activity in which they are able to find the details from a context or background field fairly easily through analysis. Borich (2007) stated that analytical learners love the grammar. They prefer being given the grammar rule and may well create their own summary of the grammar system in a separate notebook. They probably enjoy being in the classroom or studying by themselves more than socializing with people outside, hence will progress slower in the language used for communicative purpose.

The second reason was due to the skill focused in this study. Actually, field dependent and field independent learners do not differ in learning ability but respond differently to the content/ skill presented as well as the learning environment (Altun & Cakan, 2006). Borich (2007) also stated that field independent learner excels in classroom learning which involves analysis, attention to details, and mastering of exercises, drills, and other focused activities, meanwhile field dependent learners seems to achieve a higher degree

of success in everyday language situations beyond the constraints of the classroom, tasks requiring interpersonal communication skills (Borich, 2007). Since the skill focused in this study was speaking, field dependent learners excel more than field independent learners.

The third reason was due to the students' culture. It is true that culture influence students' learning, particularly their learning style. It had been proved by Jian (2009) who stated that learning styles of students were influenced by their culture. He conducted a contrastive study between China and the United States. His study revealed that students from China were more dependent learners than students from the United States. Chinese culture as a high-context, traditional, collectivistic society is field-dependent. In such culture any interaction resulting in discord means one or all lose 'face', so individuals have a more global perspective their surroundings; they are more dependent to the social field. That is why Chinese students prefer to work with others, seek guidance from the teacher, and receive rewards based on group relations. In contrast, the United States as a low-context, highly industrialized, individualistic society is

predominantly field-independent, the students in it "tend to more analytical and more comfortably focus on impersonal, abstract aspects of stimuli in the environment (Gollnik & Chinn, 1994) in (Jian, 2009). So the students in the United States prefer to work independently, are task oriented, and prefer rewards based on individual competition.

The same case also happened in Indonesia society. All of students who were selected as the sample of the study were Indonesian students. They inherit Indonesian culture which was more dependent than independent. They like to socialize with others, work with others, and cooperate with others. There are some values that they believe like *gotong royong*, *bersatu kita teguh bercerai kita runtuh* and so forth. Those values are educated to them since they were born and they become students' culture which affects their characters and their styles in learning. Field dependent learners are more accustomed with the teaching technique which assigned them to work in group compared to field independent learners. That is why they could excel better in learning compared to field independent learners.

4. Conclusion, Suggestion, and Implication

From the previous explanation, it can be concluded that task-based learning technique and learning styles did affect students' speaking achievement. Task-based learning technique could influence students' speaking achievement because it provided sufficient opportunity for students to use the language, provided more exposure on the target language, and increased students' interest, motivation, and self confidence. Meanwhile, learning styles could influence students' speaking achievement due to the teaching technique implemented by the teacher, skill focused in the study, and students' culture.

The result of the study strongly implied that teachers should reconsider the implementation of presentation, practice, production technique since it is considered less effective teaching technique in helping students in achieving their learning goals. The result of the study proved that task-based learning technique can be one of alternatives to teach speaking since it can maximize the students' chance to engage in doing things with language and to develop their language ability. At last, it can improve the students' ability in speaking. Even though there are still

some challenges to implementing task-based learning technique, teachers should train on how to implement task-based learning technique effectively. It is so fruitful for students that they can obtain the ability to communicate well.

The result of the study also showed that both field dependent and field independent learners are better facilitated through the implementation of task-based learning technique than through the implementation of presentation, practice, production technique. This implies that task-based learning technique is suitable to be implemented for both those styles of learning. It accommodates the students' diverse in the preference of learning. This finding also indicates that the use of task-based learning technique in teaching speaking matches with the students' learning styles. When students' learning styles are matched with appropriate teaching techniques, their motivation, performance, and achievement will be increased and be enhanced. When mismatches exists between learning styles of the learners in a class and the teaching technique of the teacher, the students may become bored and inattentive in class, and

get discouraged about the course. Of course, the students' achievement is low.

In order to overcome this, it is strongly recommended for teachers that in teaching the students, they must be aware of individual learning styles and learner diversity. To achieve a desired learning outcome, teachers should provide teaching activities which are compatible with the ways through which learners like to learn the language. It is absolutely true that students differ consistently from each other in their preferences for certain ways of processing information. Matching or mismatching students' learning styles with instructional techniques affects learning significantly. Therefore, in selecting teaching techniques and designing lesson activities, teachers must always take into account their students' preferred way of learning the language. In this case, they can teach in a way that is appealing to students.

Besides providing implications for teachers, the implication of this study can also be subjected to students. The findings of this study are helpful to students in demonstrating the importance of learning style identification. Students are recommended to identify the best way(s) through which they can learn the

language more fruitfully. Knowledge of his or her learning style is beneficial in which the learner will now be aware of his or her strengths and weaknesses in terms of learning experiences. Therefore, future learning may be enriched if the learners maintain their strengths and improve on their weaknesses. Aside from that, this will increase their motivation because they may feel more comfortable to learn; therefore they can achieve the desired learning goal effectively.

Based on the research findings and implications presented previously, it is strongly recommended that: first, teacher should implement the task-based learning technique in teaching speaking since the achievement of speaking can be improved by its implementation. In addition, this technique can also accommodate the two learning styles; they are field dependent learners and field independent learners. All language teachers are invited to become familiar with the task-based learning technique which is a very popular and adaptable framework in language teaching. Students in this study were quite receptive to task-based learning framework. When adopting this framework, language teachers should provide their students with a variety of

enjoyable tasks. Carrying out a variety of tasks influences students' progress and attitudes towards the lesson. A willingness to learn is observed whenever students are given tasks that involve them completely. Rather than being passive listeners, learners prefer to be active receivers. Therefore, serious consideration should be given to task-based learning technique and language teachers should provide their students with opportunities to make progressive use of content learnt through a variety of tasks.

Second, teachers should always be aware with students' diversity which includes students' preferences in learning. This greatly affects students' success in language learning. Teachers should keep in mind that every activity or every technique that they implement must suit with students' learning style. It is to obtain the intended learning goal successfully. In this case, it is suggested that teachers employ instruments to identify students' learning styles and provide instructional alternatives to address their differences, and they plan lessons to match with students' learning styles.

Third, students should be aware of their learning styles. They should

identify their preference in learning, finding out both advantages and disadvantages. They should also think about the strengths and weaknesses of their own learning style. When they recognize their learning styles, they may maximize the strengths and minimize the weaknesses to obtain a good achievement in language learning.

Fourth, for other researchers, it is recommended to conduct a research on some variables which affect students' speaking ability. Since this study used task-based learning technique and students' learning styles, it is suggested to think about other teaching techniques and variables which may affect students' speaking ability, such as students' motivation, attitude, aptitude and so forth. Research on different kinds of learning styles are also fruitful to be investigated. These can be conducted on different settings, subjects, and materials as well to obtain a more comprehensive study.

Fifth, for the institution, it is suggested to conduct a survey study concerning on students' learning styles of Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha students. The result of the study then is used as a data-based particularly on the learning styles of the students. This is very useful

to give a clear picture on students' learning styles of Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha and to provide a suitable policy which suit with the students' learning styles, for example providing appropriate learning media matching with students' learning styles. This is one way to facilitate students in learning, and of course, to improve students' learning achievement. It is a small thing which is often neglected- given a very little

attention, but actually has a great impact on the students' success in learning.

REFERENCES

- Altun, A & Cakan, M. 2006. *Undergraduate Students' Academic Achievement, Field Dependent/Independent Learning Styles, and Attitude toward Computers*. <http://www.ifets.info>. Retrieved on May 9, 2009.
- Borich, Gary. D. 2007. *Effective Teaching Methods. Research-Based Practice*. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Jian, Hong. 2009. *A Contrastive Study between Cultural Diversity of Learning Styles between China and the United States*. www.Ccsenet.org. Retrieved on August 1, 2010.
- Sinatra, A. F. 2009. *Optimizing Task-Based Activity to Improve Students' Speaking Ability*. Unpublished Thesis, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Solo.
- Skehan, Peter. 2003. *A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning*. New York : Oxford University Press.
- Lightbown, Patsy. M & Nina Spada. 1999. *How Languages are Learned*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Meehan, Paul. 2005. *Counting for Style*. <http://www.tefl.net/esl>. Retrieved on November 14, 2009.
- Oura, Gail. K. 2001. *Authentic Task-Based Materials: Bringing the Real World Into the Classroom*. www.jrc.sophia.ac.jp. Retrieved on November 12, 2009.
- Willis, Jane. 2007. *Criteria for Identifying Tasks for Task-Based Learning*. <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk>. Retrieved on May 9, 2009.

